federal register

Thursday
August 11, 1988

Part III

Department of Agriculture

Cooperative State Research Service

7 CFR Part 3400

Special Research Grants Program; Administrative Provisions; Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Cooperative State Research Service

7 CFR Part 3400

Special Research Grants Program; Administrative Provisions

AGENCY: Cooperative State Research Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking.

SUMMARY: Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS) proposes to amend its regulations relating to the administration of the Special Research Grants Program conducted under the authority of section 2(c)(1) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended (7 U.S.C. 4501(c)(1)). This action is being taken to modify the weight factors associated with the proposal selection criteria on the current Peer Panel Scoring Form under this program. These changes will facilitate the evaluation of applications and the award of project grants.

DATE: Comments concerning this proposed amendment are invited from interested individuals and organizations. To be considered in the formulation of a final rule, all relevant material must be received on or before September 12, 1988.

ADDRESS: Comments should be sent to Terry J. Pacovsky, Chief, Grants Administrative Management, Office of Grants and Program Systems, Cooperative State Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20251-2200.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Terry J. Pacovsky at (202) 475-5024.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Paperwork Reduction

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this proposed rule have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0022.

Classification

This proposed rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12291 and it has been determined that it is not a major rule because it does not involve a substantial or major impact on the Nation's economy or on large numbers of individuals or businesses. There will be no major increase in cost or prices for consumers, individual industries, Federal, State, or local governmental agencies, or on geographical regions. It will not have a significant economic impact on competitive employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or on the ability of U.S. enterprises to compete with foreign-based enterprises in domestic or export markets. In addition, it will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities as defined in the Regulatory Flexibility Act, Pub. L. No. 96-534 (5 U.S.C. 601).

Regulatory Analysis

Not required for this proposed rulemaking.

Environmental Impact Statement

This proposed regulation does not significantly affect the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

The Special Research Grants Program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.200. For reasons set forth in the Final Rule-related Notice to 7 CFR Part 3015, Subpart V (48 FR 29115, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

Background and Purpose

Under the authority of section 2(c)(1) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to make grants to carry out research to facilitate or expand promising breakthroughs in areas of the food and agricultural sciences of importance to the Nation to land-grant colleges and universities, research foundations established by land-grant colleges and universities, State agricultural experiment stations, and to all colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity in food and agricultural research. The administrative regulations governing grant programs authorized by section 2(c)(1) are proposed to be changed as follows:

Section 3400.4(a)(2). CSRS proposes to change the deadline date from date of receipt to date of postmark. This proposed change will give applicants greater certainty with respect to the timeliness of their proposals.

Section 3400.4(c)(9). A substantial number of research proposals involve participation by outside individuals or organizations which is not described sufficiently in the proposal. We propose adding the section on collaborative arrangements to facilitate both the technical and administrative review of the proposal by requiring the proposal to clearly identify the performer of each task of the project, the commitment of the party concerned to perform the task, and the proposed recipient of the award.

Section 3400.4(c)(12). This subsection is proposed to be revised to prohibit the use of grant funds under this program for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces; purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility as mandated by section 1409 (a)(2) and (b)(1) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C 450i).

Section 3400.4(c)(13)(iii). CSRS proposes adding the section on laboratory animal care to ensure that uniform care and treatment of laboratory animals is practiced in all research projects supported by USDA.

Section 3400.10(a). We propose removing the paragraph that refers to the Federal Advisory Committee Act governing the establishment and operation of peer review groups because this requirement no longer applies to this program (7 U.S.C. 450i).

Section 3400.15(a). Several former peer panel members who have evaluated grant proposals under the Special Research Grants Program have written to USDA progam officials stating that certain criteria used in the evaluation process contain higher weight factors than their level of importance merit; consequently, they have suggested that the criteria be combined, revised, or given lower weight factors. By proposing to alter the current weighting system, CSRS hopes to provide a more equitable method of evaluating and ranking research proposals submitted under this program.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 3400

Grant programs—agriculture, Grants administration.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, Title 7, Chapter XXXIV, Part 3400 of the Code of Federal Regulations is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 3400—[AMENDED]

1. The authority citation for Part 3400 continues to read as follows:

Authority: Section 2(h) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended (7 U.S.C. 450i(h)).

§ 3400.2 [Amended]

2. In § 3400.2(j), the word "advise" is revised to read "advice".

3. Section 3400.4 is amended by redesignating paragraphs (c)(9) through (c)(15) as paragraphs (c)(10) through (c)(16), by adding new paragraphs (c)(9) and (c)(13)(iii), and by revising paragraphs (a)(2), (b), the heading of (c)(1), (c)(2), the first sentence of

(c)(11)(ii), the third through last sentences of (c)(12), paragraph (c)(13)(i), the last sentence of (c)(13)(ii), the third sentence of (c)(15), and (c)(16) to read as follows:

§ 3400.4 How to apply for a grant.

(a) * * *

(2) Deadline dates for having proposal packages postmarked;

* * * * *

(b) *Grant Application Kit.* A Grant Application Kit will be made available to any potential grant applicant who requests a copy. This kit contains required forms, certifications, and instructions applicable to the submission of grant proposals.

(c) *Format for research grant proposals.* * * *

(1) *Grant Application.* * * *

(2) *Title of Project.* The title of the project must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the research. This title will be used to provide information to the Congress and other interested parties who may be unfamiliar with scientific terms; therefore, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as "investigation of" or "research on" should not be used.

* * * * *

(9) *Collaborative arrangements.* If the proposed project requires collaboration with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, such collaboration must be fully explained and justified. Evidence should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved agree with the arrangements. It should be specifically indicated whether or not such collaborative arrangements have the potential for any conflict(s) of interest. Proposals which indicate collaborative involvement must state which proposer is to receive any resulting grant award, since only one submitting individual, corporation, organization, institution, agency, or other entity can be the recipient of a research project grant under one proposal.

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(11) *Personnel support.* * * *

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(ii) Vitae of the principal investigator(s), senior associate(s), and other professional personnel to assist reviewers in evaluating the competence and experience of the project staff. * * *

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(12) *Budget.* * * * A copy of the form which must be used for this purpose, along with instructions for completion, is included in the Grant Application Kit identified under § 3400.4(b) of this part and may be reproduced as needed by proposers. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles and can be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed research project. *No funds will be awarded for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces; purchases or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility.* All research project grants awarded under this part shall be issued without regard to matching funds or cost sharing.

(13) *Research involving special considerations.* * * *

(i) *Recombinant DNA molecules.* All key personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of a proposed performing organization are required to comply with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. The Grant Application Kit, identified above in § 3400.4(b), contains forms which are suitable for such certification of compliance.

(ii) *Human subjects at risk.* * * * The Grant Application Kit, identified above in § 3400.4(b), contains forms which are suitable for such certification.

(iii) *Laboratory and animal care.* The responsibility for the humane care and treatment of laboratory animals used in any research project supported with grant funds provided by the Department rests with the performing organization. All key personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of the proposed performing organization are required to comply with the Animal Welfare Act (Pub. L. 89–544, 1966, as amended (Pub. L. 91–579, Pub. L. 94–279, and Pub. L. 99–198, 7 U.S.C. 2131 *et seq.*) and the regulations promulgated thereunder by the Secretary of Agriculture in 9 CFR Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of vertebrate animals held or used for research, teaching, or other activities supported by Federal awards. In the case of laboratory animals used or intended for use in CSRS-administered research, the eligible institutions shall adhere to the principles enunciated in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals,* described in NIH Publication No. 86–23 (Revised 1985), and to the USDA regulations and standards issued under the public laws enunciated above. In case of conflict, the higher standard shall be used. In the event that a project involving laboratory animals is recommended for award, the proposer will be required to submit a statement certifying that the research plan has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at the proposing organization or institution.

* * * * *

(15) *Additions to project description.* * * * Each set of such materials must be identified with the title of the research project as it appears in the Grant Application and the name(s) of the principal investigator(s). * * *

(16) *Organizational management information.* Specific management information relating to a proposing individual or organization shall be submitted on a *one-time basis prior to the award of a research project grant* identified under this part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. Copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling the requirements contained in this section are available upon request from the agency specified in this part.

4. Section 3400.7 is amended by revising paragraph (d)(3) to read as follows:

§ 3400.7 Use of funds; changes.

* * * * *

(d) *Changes in approved budget.* * * *

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(3) involve transfers of amounts previously budgeted for training costs directly related to the research project;

* * * * *

5. Section 3400.8 is amended by revising the last item to read as follows:

§ 3400.8 Other Federal statutes and regulations that apply.

* * * * *

35 U.S.C. 200 *et seq.*—Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

6. Section 3400.10 is revised as follows:

§ 3400.10 Establishment and operation of peer review groups.

Subject to § 3400.5, the Secretary will adopt procedures for the conduct of peer reviews and the formulation of recommendations under § 3400.14.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

7. Section 3400.15 is amended by revising the selection criteria appearing in the peer panel scoring form under paragraph (a) and constructing a revised form as follows:

§ 3400.15 Review criteria.

(a) * * *

Peer Panel Scoring Form

* * * * *

II. Selection Criteria:

	Score 1–10	Weight factor	Score X weight factor	Comments
1. Overall scientific and technical quality of proposal		10		
2. Scientific and technical quality of approach		10		
3. Relevance and importance of proposed research to solution of specific areas of inquiry		6		
4. Feasibility of attaining objectives; adequacy of professional training and experience, facilities and equipment		5		

Score _____

Summary Comments _____

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Done at Washington, DC, this 4th day of August 1986.

John Patrick Jordan,

Administrator, Cooperative State Research Service.

[FR Doc. 88–18090 Filed 8–10–88; 8:45 am]

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